VARIOUS VERSES

W. T. Bell

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VARIOUS VERSES

BY

WILLIAM TEMPLE BELL

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THE NEST.

There's a bird's nest in the grasses,
  Still moist from the warm June rain.
Where a naked bird, and three small eggs,
  My wandering steps restrain.

I view the tiny grass-walled home,
  While the mother steals away.
And ask, does the young bird's life begin
  Here, in the nest, today?

Or, in the vaguely forming egg,
  Did life begin as a germ,
Quickening the embryonic bird,
  Throughout all the brooding term?

Or, was its beginning remote.
  Beyond the egg, and the nest?
Beyond the lives of the parent birds,
  Must we continue our quest?

Must we seek the primal atom,
  One amid millions more?
And how did the atom attain it?
  Must we other worlds explore?

If it came from a far-off world,
Say where was the life begun?
Shall we search the limitless ether,
And trace it beyond the sun?

My thoughts cannot rise to the flight.
My brain cannot understand.
And, recalled from the region of clouds,
I seek the firmer land.

O restless and questioning man,
Upborne by daring resolve,
Thou wouldst learn creation's wondrous plan,
And all its mysteries solve.

Boasting thy power and thy skill,
The elements thou wouldst mould;
Choosing and shaping them to thy will,
'Till thy glass a cell should hold.

Yea, a cell wherein life should start;
But with all thy thought and strife,
Though thou wouldst willingly drain thy heart,
Thou couldst not impart it life.

Thou hast seen what eye cannot see.
Canst measure and weigh the stars.
Yet the thought ever cometh to thee,
That thy skill hath bounds and bars.

Though thy spirit may yearn and soar,
When its highest flight is flown,
It falls and fails where the breakers roar,
On the brink of the Unknown.

I stood by the grave of my friend.
And wept with his weeping wife.
And sadly I asked, is this the end,
Is there nothing more of life?

Has my friend been changed into clay?
Was he naught but clod and stone?
Or if he has vanished quite away,
Oh, where has his essence gone?

How lately with welcoming smile
He beamed, as he clasped my hand.
And now, no word can his glance beguile.
He heeds not that lone I stand.

The butterfly hides in the mold,
From the winter's snow and frost.
And my friend was far more dear to me;
Can he, and can it be lost?

When the life-giving spring returns,
With the warm sun in the skies,
The butterfly wakes from seeming death,
And joyously flits and flies.

Will my friend not awaken too,
Freed from all sorrow and strife,
With nobler duties to learn and do,
Awake to a broader life?

Now attuned to a higher key,
And with finer senses thrilled,
Is there now no more of mystery,
Are his longings all fulfilled?

Does he see, with a vision clear,
What here was obscured by breath?
Does he know at last where life begins?
Has he learned thy meaning, Death?

The mother bird waits to return
To her duties at the nest.
And I but hinder; so I will go
Unto mine; for that is best.

O song sparrow, gladsome and free,
I go with a stronger heart.
I will strive, and serve, and wait like thee.
Will do at my best my part.

MAGGIE.

'Tis lonely; O how lonely;
The stricken mother cried.
All joy has fled, since that dear form
Was taken from my side.
Her sunny smile, and winning voice,
Are gone and silent now.
Why should the icy hand of death
Be placed on that fair brow?

She sought the tender flowrets;
Herself as sweet as they.
And like the birds of springtime,
Her song was ever gay.
Now the flowers bloom ungathered,
Never more her song we'll hear;
She is hid from sight forever,
In the earth so cold and drear.

Cease thus to mourn, fond mother,
For your dearest, passed away.
For the chill moist earth has hidden
Nothing but her mortal clay.
If in heaven there are flowers,
She among them there does bloom.
Hope to meet and know your loved one,
In a life beyond the tomb.

1857.

TO A WILD PRIMROSE.

I love thee! flower of that fair isle,
Where first I knew a mother's smile;
Though years unnoticed since have fled,
Leaving their foot-prints on my head,
And bearing boyhood's dreams with them
And bringing manhood's hopes and fears,
I love thee still, thou golden gem,
Recalling scenes of other years.

Regrets are not for thee, fair flower;
Bright offspring of an April hour.
No sad remembrance comes to thee
Of home and friends beyond the sea.
To thee fond memory brings no pains,
No fruitless hopes, no friendships dead.
You live to bloom while summer reigns,
And vanish when its joys are fled.

1861.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

Come to the field of death, and see
What heaps of bleeding slain are there.
Loud are the shouts of victory,
Borne on the dense and smoky air.
The columns fly, that fought in vain.
The victors, when the strife is done,
Breathing exultant on the plain,
Tell of a glorious conflict won.

O horrid harvest! Gory fray!
Why was this deadly carnage made?
Why, in this land, at bright noonday,
Does murder flash her crimson blade?
Have hated tyrants, mad with pride,
Dared to invade our sacred shore?
No; or their minions, side by side,
Should sink in death, to rise no more.

But in our midst, a demon band
Have roused this suicidal strife;
And madly caused the brothers' hand
To arm against his brother's life.
Cast out each cruel bitter thought;
In peace unite; what e'er the cost.
Or liberty, so dearly bought,
Will be in blood, forever lost.

1861.

HEATHER BELLS.

In the west the sun is peeping
O'er the distant gloomy fells;
And his last bright beams are creeping
'Mid the rosy heather bells.

Where the mountain rills are streaming,
Soft the rippling music swells,
'Till it wakes the echoes, dreaming
Up among the heather bells.

Through the firs the breeze is playing,
Where the deepest shadow dwells.
And the timid hare is straying
O'er the fairy heather bells.

Now the twilight shades descending,
Gather in the gloomy dells.
And the day with night is blending,
'Round the tiny heather bells.

From the east the moon is glancing;
Calling fairies from their cells.
All night long their feet are dancing
'Neath the dewy heather bells.

1862.

A SERENADE.

Slowly moves each weary day,
How the lengthened moments stay,
While the lonely hours I stray,
Far away from thee love.

Now the sun's departing light,
Brings once more the gloomy night,
But I taste no dear delight,
When I'm not with thee love.

Twilight shadows softly creep,
And the flowrets close in sleep,
While the leaves with dewdrops weep,
  Would I were with thee love.

Happy songsters gayly sing
Merry welcomes to the spring,
While my thoughts on airy wing,
  Fly away to thee love.

Though the roses sweetly bloom,
Sadness sheds its deepest gloom;
Nothing can my life illume,
  But the thought of thee love.

All is gloom; and all is care,
What though skies be bright and fair,
No sweet pleasure can I share,
  If 'tis not with thee love.

Each fair form I chance to see,
But reminds my soul of thee.
I can never happy be,
  'Till I'm blest with thee love.

1862.

WAR'S VICTIMS.

Saw ye the ranks of that mighty host,
  Like a sea of steel, all gleaming bright?
Heard ye their song, on mountain and coast,
  At rosy morn and shady night?
Countless they came, like the leaves of spring.
A nation's priceless offering.

They heard their country's cry of woe.
  They freely dared the sanguine strife.
Bravely they met the brother foe,
  And offered there each gallant life.
And many a proud heart ceased to beat,
Amid the conflict's deadly heat.

See you their graves on each battle plain?
  Thickly they cover the blood-stained land.
No more will the bugle's echoing strain,
  At morn awake that fearless band.
Their country called, they fought for her,
And won, a nameless sepulcher.

And now, the maiden, mother, wife,
  Whose loved and loving ones will bless
Their longing eyes no more, in life,
  Drain the deep cup of bitterness.
God of the fatherless, forlorn,
Temper the storm to those who mourn.

1863.

KING ARTHUR'S WELL.

Marching along by the Roman Wall,
Up the crags, and over the fell.
Antiquarian pilgrims all,
Seeking the site of King Arthur's well.
Merry pilgrims; five in all,
Longing to drink from the mystic well.

Much we talked of the magic grot,
Where the king and his huntsmen sleep
Enchanted all, in some unknown spot,
Under the Sewingshields Crags so steep.
Talked we too of Meg Merrilies' cot.
Of Triermain Castle, and Thirlwall Keep.

One had been in Cheltenham Shaw.
Two at Bath and Tunbridge Well.
All had tasted of Gilsland Spa,
And of its Popping Stone could tell.
And one the great Niagara saw;
But none had seen King Arthur's well.

Wading slow through the tangled ling,
At last we stood on the grassy brink.
The wonderful well was a muddy spring.
Sore disappointed were we, I think.
The farmer's cattle stood 'round in a ring.
They had troubled the waters, while trying to drink.

Perhaps they were antiquarians too;
Come to explore that queer little glen.
And are there not some of the human crew,
Who, finding a wonder beyond their ken,
Too dull to unravel the twisted clew,
Muddy the fountain for wiser men?

Then over the springlet's mossy rim,
Knelt our cup-bearer to his task.
And lips were pressed to the goblet's brim,
But of the water, none cared to ask.
Though one declared, 'twas too strong for him,
And quenched his thirst from a pocket flask.

Long had we sought that haunted spring.
We found it there on the rocky fell.
And a scribbling pilgrim promised to sing.
And of our search in rhyme to tell.
Then over the crags, and through the ling,
Came we away from King Arthur's well.

1865.

TYNESIDE.

Wild rushing river; dear romantic Tyne!
Recalling happy hours that once were mine,
When childhood gazed upon thy swelling floods,
And roved untrammeled, through thy cooling
woods.
Since then, my feet have wandered far from thee,
'Mid deeper woods, in lands beyond the sea.
But though afar I gaze on other streams,
Thine was the vale I visited in dreams.
Here was my home; from yon low cottage door,
My boyhood gazed, and longed for nothing more.
The dark brown hills confined the narrow view,
This little village all the world I knew.
Each winding street alone I sadly trace,
And seek the playmate in each gazing face.
All, all are changed; though memory changes not;
And I, intruding stranger, am forgot.
In yon green churchyard sleep the village dead.
No storms disturb them in their narrow bed.
For them life's jarring conflicts all are o'er;
And sorrow chills each throbbing heart no more.
There the proud lordling mingles, 'neath the sod,
With humbler human clay on which he trod.
The mountain daisy spreads its tinted bloom,
Without distinction o'er each grassy tomb.
Wealth gilds the pathway of a chosen few,
But all may slumber 'neath the pendant yew.

1865.

ON THE HILLS.

I stand upon the rocky steep.
The rising sun awakes the day;
And night's dark shades reluctant creep
To gloomy woods and glens away.
The dew drops sparkling at my feet,
The heather's rosy bells adorn.
The skylark soars with song to greet
The bright midsummer's morn.

Northward is Scotia's bleak domain.
Her glens and rugged mountains gray.
While near, the hazy purple plain
Of Britain, southward fades away.
Afar the frowning gloomy fell,
Slopes to the shining lake beneath.
While o'er its side clear streamlets well,
Unheard amid the tangled heath.

Beside me is the crumbling wall
Of Rome; once mistress of this isle.
Strange that her mighty empire, all
Should perish; and this ruined pile
Outlive her glory; those frail hands
That reared this heap, and conquering came,
Now sleep forgotten; but all lands
Know of their deeds and fame.

Yon ruin marks their guarded camp.
And yon half-hidden stony street,
Has echoed to the martial tramp,
In ages past, of Roman feet.
They quenched their thirst at yonder well.
And when the night crept o'er the lea,
There gathered there a group to tell
The tales of far-off Italy.

Now the rude peasant of the hill,
Rears in their camp, his shielding lone.
Unheeding all, that Roman skill,
Had marked each block, and shaped each stone.
Strange sculptured columns, altars gray,
Upon the cot's low walls appear.
Fierce time has spared their gods of clay,
But where are those who worshipped here?

And thou, green island of the sea,
Need'st tremble at the power no more,
That won, enslaved, and shielded thee,
Then tamely vanished from thy shore.
The wondering stranger on the steep,
Who strives to trace the hamlet's plan,
While gazing on this crumbling heap,
May learn the littleness of man.

1865.

RAINDROPS ON THE LAKE.

Idly gazing from the window
Of the cottage on the shore,
I watch the heavy clouds,
As they come the hill tops o'er.
'Till the water-laden masses
Into misty fragments break,
And descending, thickly scatter
Floods of raindrops on the lake.

How the limpid drops rebound,
'Mid the waving rushes tall.
How the ripples circle 'round
In the water where they fall.
'Till they reach the rocky brink,
Where the tiny wavelets break.
While o'er each dissolving link,
Fall the raindrops on the lake.

Now the leaping bubbles dance,
In a fanciful cotillion.
Now recede, and now advance;
Merry dancers by the million.
While their footsteps, as they tread
O'er the waves a music make,
With the thunders overhead,
For the raindrops on the lake.

'Round the mountain's gloomy brow,
The snowy mists are creeping.
And the noisy streamlets now
O'er their rocky beds are leaping.
While their waters dark and strong,
Bend the slender fern and brake,
As they swell the wordless song
Of the raindrops on the lake.

Now the gathered storm is o'er,
And the bright sun shines again.
And I think of airy castles,
That have fallen, like the rain.
Think of many a darling vision,
That has risen but to break
And ripple for a moment
On the surface of life's lake.

1865.

ON THE JETTY.

Six years ago, I stood on the jetty,
Watching the waves as they washed the gray sand.
Waiting to sail in the coast steamer "Betty;"
Because Dolly Walker refused me her hand.
Sadly I gazed on the fields, green and yellow.
Bidding the woods and the brown hills adieu.
Thinking myself a poor heart-broken fellow.
Feeling forlorn, and decidedly blue.

Three years I lived in the old town of Bristol.
From hostler to coachman, I rose by degrees.
'Till one day, I received a long loving epistle;
'Twas signed, "Dolly Walker, Stockton-on-Tees."
It said she had ne'er been the same since we parted.
That long she had tried to forget me, in vain.
She vowed, that to me she was ever true-hearted;
And asked but to see her dear Richard again.

And now, once more I stand on the jetty.
'Tis three years to-day, since with Dolly I wed.
I'm waiting to sail, but not in the "Betty."
I ship in the "Queen," for New Zealand; instead.
Three years I lived lamenting my folly.
Caught by a letter, when baited so plain.
But now, I am flying from Stockton and Dolly.
If I only get off, she'll not catch me again.

1865.

THE EMPTY SLEEVE.

'Twas in the warm June weather,
Near ten o'clock one night,
When Hessie and I, together
Walked in the clear moonlight.

I told her I was going
To the southland far away;
To where the men in blue,
Were fighting the men in gray.

I heard her warm heart throbbing,
And tears came on her cheek,
While I kissed away the words
That her lips refused to speak.

And promised, ere we parted,
To win her for my wife.
And she pledged her heart's affection,
That should never change in life.

Marching, fighting, suffering,
For three years in the ranks,
I helped to win the battles
That gained our leader thanks.

Weary of death and danger,
When the end at last had come,
I left the din and bloodshed,
Longing for peace at home.

Hoping that love would cherish
Its flowers, grown wild so long;
And wake in my heart the echoes
Of its half-forgotten song.

What if the hand I promised,
  Away with its arm was cleft?
My heart was as large as ever,
  And another hand was left.

And what, though unpromoted
  I came from a well-fought war?
Not always does merit alone
  Gain either band or star.

But she came not to greet me;
  Though I passed by her father's door.
And she heeded not the promise
  She had made, three years before.

And I heard a village rumor,
  That a colonel, gay and smart,
With plenty of money and leisure,
  Was skirmishing for her heart.

And I half forgave the bullet
  That caused my aching hurt.
And thanked the fate that made me poor,
  And saved me from a flirt.

Now another year had passed;
  And I am happy to-night.
For a gleaming pair of loving eyes
  Watch over me as I write.

And a tiny hand is laid
So tenderly on my head.
But neither wealth nor shoulder-straps
Did its womanly owner wed.

She says, her one-armed husband
Is the kindest man on earth.
And she cared not for his bank account
But married him for his worth.

And Hessie, is forsaken;
Left to her thoughts alone.
The gay young colonel won her love,
But carefully kept his own.

And I pity her; poor girl,
Though she played me a faithless part.
If I have an empty sleeve,
She has an empty heart.

1866.

NIAGARA.

I saw thee first, Niagara! where Erie's waves forsake
The deep untrodden caverns of her ever-rolling lake.
Where upon thy rocky shore, the dashing billows break,
While the forests green were glowing in September's sunny light.

I saw thee where thy rapids were leaping in their wrath;
And the overhanging branches drooped beneath their misty bath.
Where the dark brown rocks in masses were piled across thy path,
While thy torrent all unheeding, swept madly on its way.

I stood upon the brink, where thy angry waters bound,
Amid the whirling spray by the flitting rainbow crowned.
And I listened long, delighted, to the music of thy sound,
That soothes the earthly passions of the troubled soul to sleep.

I watched thy stream descend on the jagged rocks below,
And rebound all rent and mangled by the fury of the blow;
To fall amid the steaming waves that shattered, swiftly flow,
Dismayed, to join the current of Ontario's smoother lake.

I've seen the forest old in the tempest bend and quail.
I've stood upon the mountain 'mid the lightning and the hail;

And rocked upon the ocean, to the surging of the gale;
But I ne'er saw nature's grandeur with her beauty so combined.

And those beside thy stream who with me in wonder gaze
Upon thy rushing waters, and thy changing veil of haze,
Will pass away, as passed the throngs that came in other days;
As fleeting as the shifting sand upon thy changeless shore.

1866.

DEATH.

Earth is thy empire; universal Death!
And all thereon allegiance owe to thee.
The icy north, or tropic's sultry breath,
Oppose no barriers to thy stern decree.
The desert's arid plain, the flowery field,
The pathless forest, or the ocean's rage,
No secret power, or magic charm may yield,
To free thy subjects from their vassalage.

Thou art a mighty king, and terrible.
The infant, moaning at its mother's breast,
Sinking beneath the workings of thy spell,
Striving in vain to find its wonted rest,
Turns in its pain, to seek the mother's clasp;
Who warms its body 'till life's throes depart.
Then yields its form to thy insatiate grasp,
And owns thy power in her breaking heart.

The hoary Christian, weary of a life
That day on day of bitter toil has passed,
Who feels the pangs of dissolution's strife,
And hails the closing of his cares at last,
Relying on the promise of his God,
He prays for courage with his sinking breath;
And, while he bows beneath the heavenly rod,
Shrinks from the dreaded mystery of death.

See yon poor wretch, within a prison cell.
Dim shines the daylight on his face so thin.
What strange emotions in his bosom swell,
As mind goes back to years unstained by sin.
To-morrow sees him die; and, will he shrink
From that which blends eternity and time?
Life has no joy; he little fears to drink
The draught that frees him from a world of crime.

Yon gorgeous couch supports a royal head.
The monarch feels the summons dread has come,
And terror fills his soul. Pride, pomp, have fled.
A mightier king now calls his spirit home.
Earth was his heaven; 'twas the felon's hell;
Who, in another world may find a heaven
Where fierce temptations come not; and may dwell
In peace and rest, and know his sins forgiven.

Bitter 'twould be to die on ocean wild.
'Mid splintered spars, rent sails and parting ropes.
While shrieks the loving wife, or helpless child,
As sinks the vessel and all earthly hopes.
To see the breaker snatch the loved one's form,
Without the power to follow, or to save.
To battle vainly with the blinding storm,
And sink exhausted, in the deep cold wave.

Some die with curses curdling on their tongue;
Upbraiding nature for the work she made.
Some coward souls by suicide are flung
To self-imposed perdition. Some, 'tis said
Die of a malady called broken heart.
Yearning for loving words too seldom spoken,
Their souls too highly strung, with sudden start,
Snap in life's cold wind, like a harp string broken.

And thousands in all ages die in war.
  And deem it glory, courage thus to prove.
But those who slay in battle, felons are;
  Save when they fight for that or those they love.
Bad men in carnage ever did delight.
  And learned to murder, ere the cleansing flood.
But surely, angels shudder at the sight
  Of men red-reeking with their brothers' blood.

Live in the light of reason. Let thy hand
  Do no one wrong; but succor the oppressed.
Firm in the strength of truth and honor stand.
  Fear nothing, but the chidings of thy breast.
Trust all to nature's loving care, who gave
  To thy mysterious form its living breath;
And when thy feet shall stand beside the grave,
  Thou needs not fear to grapple, even death.

1866.

BALLYBAY.

It was on an April day;
  The weather thick and rainy,
That I passed through Ballybay,
  As I came from Castle Blaney.

I saw crowds of people there,
And found 'twas market day.
So I stopped to see the fair,
At the town of Ballybay.

There was corn and there was grass,
Fowls, cattle, pigs, and hay,
And many an Irish lass,
On the streets of Ballybay.

And women short and tall,
Were selling eggs and butter,
With each a little stall,
By the margin of the gutter.

I wandered through the crowd,
In the tumult and the fray,
And heard the babble loud,
There, alone, in Ballybay.

And all was unfamiliar;
'Till a gossoon, rich in rags,
Sung the song of "Gentle Annie,"
From a heap of dusty bags.

And in my heart I thanked him,
For the little simple lay.
And felt that all were friends;
Even there, in Ballybay.

And I pondered, while I listened
To the words, unheard so long,
How strangers changed to brothers,
At the music of a song.

1866.

LANERCOST ABBEY.

'Twas early morning when I crossed
Thy threshold; hoary Lanercost;
And stood within thy ancient pile,
And traced alone, thy pillared aisle,
And gazed upon thy cold damp walls,
Where dim and soft the sunlight falls,
Which, struggling through the tinted pane,
Seems half afraid to shine again.

Massive and grand
Thy ruins stand,
Covered with carvings deep and quaint.
With vaults within, and tombs without,
And churchyard hugging thy walls about,
Where sleeps the sinner beside the saint.
The nettle grows where thy walls decay.
Roof and windows are broken away.
Through doorways wide the sunlight streams,
And thy sides are stained by time and weather.
The ivy creeps in the opening seams,
Binding thy crumbling walls together.

Thy tower square
With its winding stair,
Worn, and covered with dust, I scale;
And standing where monkish feet have stood,
I gaze on village, and meadow, and wood,
In the winding folds of the Irthing's vale.
Yon castled hall, that crowns the steep,
Was Warden Howard's feudal keep;
Whose name and fame, be they good or ill,
Like thy castle, Naworth, are living still.
Rough lord of the Marches; "Belted Will."
The queer old bridge, with its slender arch,
The forest of fir, and plane, and larch,
The level fields, and their thorny hedge,
The path that creeps by the river's edge,
Thy gateway, old Abbey, arching and lone,
Lingering, though wall and gate are gone,
Tells of the past with each faded stone.
In thy burial-yard a yew tree waves;
And a constant mourner is that sad tree.
Shedding its tears on sunken graves.
Broken, and mossy, and old; like thee.

All these I view in the vale below.
And my thoughts run back, in a natural flow,
To the time when Robert de Vallibus came,
And, wanting a manor, as well as a dame,
Put an end to the Laird of Gilsland's life,
And stole his lands along with his wife.

Such things were not rare in those times of strife.
But once when drunk,
A scheming monk
So scared him, with hints of retribution,
That he vowed a vow, if spared the time,
He would expiate his horrible crime,
And found a religious institution.
And to make the penance more severe,
He carried the stones now mouldering here,
From the Roman Wall, on yon distant hill,
Taxing his strength, and testing his will;
Laying all vanity on the shelf,
And making a packhorse of himself.
But when his task was finished, he bowed
To death; who claims the poor and the proud,
And he sleeps in the abbey his crimes endowed.

Thy scenes, now peaceful, calm, and tame,
Have known wild carnage, blood, and flame.
And many a royal, noble name,
Has shared with thee its crime or fame.
King Edward twice thy shelter sought,
King David dire destruction wrought.
The noble Wallace, brought thee woe,
Bruce triumphed in thy overthrow,
And Dacre's arms thy stones still show.
"The knights are dust,
Their good swords rust;"
And, to be nothing less—than just,
Their souls are with similar saints; we trust.

A horseman came in the evening late,—
With a lady fair, to the Abbey gate;
And giving the wicket a hasty knock,
He called to the porter to open the lock.
Lifted the maid from her pillion seat,
And turned the Abbot himself to greet;
Who came from the chapel in haste, to glean
What they sought at the Abbey so late at e'en.
Baring his brow,
With reverent bow,
The stranger, addressing the monk-in-chief,
In words that follow, told his grief.
"This maid is my daughter; she was taught
To live as a Christian lady ought;
But now, by love, or the devil, possessed,
She fain would wed the Laird of the West.
I wot the boy has a good-like face,
But he's lacking in land, and lacking in grace.
'Twould sting me, father, to the quick,
If she should marry a heretic.
Take her then, in your holy care;
And neither locks nor penance spare,
To make her praise and pray aright,
And keep her safe from his hated sight."
And then the father turned away;
While the old monk smiled in his curious way,
And looked at the maid, as much as to say,
I think we can manage to make you stay.
Then he led her into the the abbey gray.

Fair Margaret,
Quite in a pet,
Followed her guide to the interior;
Where queer-looking monks, with tapers dim,
Were slowly chanting a solemn hymn;
And was given in charge of the Lady Superior;*
Who, having duly learned her case,
Turned to the novice a serious face.
And much she spoke of their holy life,
Their freedom from sin and worldly strife;
Told of the Virgin, and blessed Savior,
And ended with hints on proper behavior.
Her pupil, indeed but little cared
For lectures no matter how well prepared;
And, no doubt, scarcely saw the fun
In being compelled to turn a nun,
And enter a convent, against her will;
And so she sat there thinking; 'till
The worthy matron turned to assist her
To don the dress of a blessed sister;
And led the way to her dormitory;
A little low room, in an upper story.
Then saying, "at five, I'll call you for prayer."
She locked the door, and left here there.

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* The author is well aware that it is not in good taste to introduce women to an abbey, except when presided over by an abbess; but authors of well-established reputations offer in their works situations quite as incredible; and, beside, in this case, it was necessary for the exigencies of the story.

All alone, in the dim lamp-light,
  Beside her couch the poor child crept;
And pressing her brow on the pillow white,
  Her grief o'erflowed, and she sobbed and wept.
Her mother was dead; too soon she died
For the young flower budding by her side.
Her father, a rude old bigoted beast,
Had handed her over to church and priest;
And there she heard, like hope's last knell,
The harsh key lock her prison cell.
Long she wept; but when at length
The storm of passion had drained its strength,
Slowly she rose from her pallet low,
With face so calm that none might know
'Twas ever swept by floods of woe.

Time went past,
Until at last
Days had grown into a week
  And a week its length had doubled.
Slowly color regained her cheek;
  Less by grief her sleep was troubled.
In short, the maiden had begun
To like the quiet life of a nun.
Matins, vespers, chants, confession,
Followed in regular succession.
Smoothing her sorrow's deep impression.

Standing alone one starless night,
After outwatching her lamp's faint light,
Trying to peer through the gloom in vain,
She heard a rap at her window pane.
She did not shriek, and she did not faint,
Nor call aloud to the patron saint,
But half expectant, and half in doubt,
As if she waited the signal without,
She did what some may think more rash,
She gently opened the latticed sash;
And grasped a hand that forward came,
And heard a voice that whispered her name,
And told, that she had rightly guessed,
'Twas her gallant lover, the Laird of the West.
He said he had come to claim his bride;
He had scaled the gray old abbey's side,
Clinging fast to the ivy bough,
The same green ivy that hangs there now.

Fair Margaret, leaving her convent cage,
  Trusted her feet to the living rope.
Proving that women in every age
  Have a taste for adventure, and like to elope.
They reached the ground without a fall.
Horses are waiting beyond the wall;
And she has mounted the fleetest and best,
And gone with her lover away to the West.

And what became of the runaway pair?
Indeed, my friends, I cannot tell.
And beside, though at first they may promise fair,
Such matches seldom end so well.
But this you must own the tale will prove;
That the wonderful passion men call love,
Cleverly baffled, and always will,
Both fatherly cunning, and priestly skill.

Now gone are the monks, and gone is the Prior.
And all they have left, if you should inquire,
Over Tindal Tarn way, beyond the syke,
You will hear them speak of the "Prior Dyke."
And a sulphur spring, which there I saw,
Is called to this day, the "Prior Dyke Spa."
The twelve disciples, who long before,
Stood in the niches above the door,
Along with the man of Galilee,
Have joined the things that used to be.
Though Judas went first; as they tell it to me.

Part of the abbey has been "restored;"
And a modern parson pounds the board.
Preaches and prays at the country louts,
Feeding their hopes, and soothing their doubts.
Christens them, marries them, walks by their bier,
For a stipend of blank'ty pounds a year.

And I am here with a bundle of rhymes.
Impressed by those strange old things, and times.
Glad that I came; but it must be confessed,
That I think the new things, and times are best.

1866

ANANEESE WATERS.

Clear are thy waters, Ananeese!
When the summer breezes blow.
And the hills look down, o'er thy vale of peace,
On the shadows that float below.

Wild are thy waters, Ananeese!
When the storms of winter shriek.
And the cold mist hangs like a snowy fleece,
On thy hills so dark and bleak.

Rude is the cabin standing near.
Closed is its humble latch.
And childish hunger, and woman's fear,
Are hiding beneath the thatch.

A strong man's willing ceaseless toil,
Had planted the boggy field;
And waited to reap from the flooded soil,
A harvest it could not yield.

'Till broken in heart and in strength,
He had left them there alone.
Striving a lifetime, to gain at length,
A grave that was not his own.

Gayly feasting in yonder hall,
Where mirth and joy are rife,
Is the pampered being who owns their all;
Yes, all, but soul and life.

And the steward of his broad lands,
Will ride in his carriage by;
Asking for rent from their helpless hands,
And will cast them out—to die.

Fair are thy waters, Ananeese!
All nature's works are fair.
And the shadows creep o'er thy vale in peace,
As if no wrong was there.

1866.

SUNDERED.

And we must part, who oft' have met,
As glad the dry earth meets the rain.
And we must all the past forget;
And never know its joys again.
Forget her; no; the task is vain.
As well forbid the sun to set.

The primrose blossomed in the wood,
  When first I saw her rosy face.
The foxglove, in its softest hood,
  Hung o'er the path that we did trace.
  Now, weeds are growing in the place
Where foxglove and where primrose stood.

O golden days; we then were young;
  And joy dwelt in each ardent glance.
Had we but heeded love's sweet tongue,
  Life yet had seemed the old romance.
  Had fate not broken that dear trance,
We still had hoped, and loved, and sung.

We parted. She in woman's tears;
  And I, by man's ambition filled;
To seek afar, through toilsome years,
  For paths untrod, and fields untilled.
  While thought returning, all unwilled,
Still sought her; but with many fears.

I came again; and she was wed.
  I had not asked her to be mine,
And pride will live, though love be dead.
  She proved it, by this bitter sign.
  I had no pledges to resign,
Yet rather had I found her dead.

We met; and I was fain to know
If she was happy; but she turned
Aside my questions; while aglow
Her pale face with the old light burned.
And well I knew she had not learned
Indifference; when she trembled so.

I spoke in terms of sad regret,
Of all she might have been to me.
I hear her smothered sobbing yet;
While sunk her head upon her knee.
Sundered 'till death, our paths must be,
But we the past can ne'er forget.

THE ANTIQUARIAN.

Beside yon castle wall I saw him stand;
A piece of crumbling plaster in his hand.
Fixed was his gaze; to analyze intent,
The lasting virtues of that gray cement,
Mixed into mortar—for he told me so—
By Roman legions, centuries ago.

Noting with quiet smile, my wondering view,
From his capacious pockets, forth he drew
Lumps of gray stone, and broken pots, a store
Would stock a baby's playhouse; and far more.

This came from Langley Castle's feudal hall;
And these were fragments from the Pictish wall.
Bits of red pottery, with the Samian glaze.
Bright as it shone in Caracalla's days.
With sample scraps of altars, that had been
Incensed, by worship under Constantine.
While here a coin, grown green, and scaled with rust,
Yet showed the Emperor Hadrian, on a bust.
With many things unnamed; which, at the best,
Seemed only fit to grace a jackdaw's nest.
All these were precious treasurers in his eyes;
And age but added value to the prize.
Long did he lecture o'er the antique stuff;
'Till quite convinced that I had heard enough,
I bluntly asked him, of what use are they?
He pocketed his scraps, and turned away,
As if he thought, 'twas vain his lore to waste
On one, like me, who had so little taste.

Since then, my ancient friend once tried to cross
The trackless mazes of a Border moss;
Seeking, if any knowledge he could gain,
Of some old Roman station of his brain.
His saddlebags of pockets, filled, of course,
With chippings; half a load for any horse.
He wandered on, 'till quite confused he grew.
His hopes waxed smaller, and his footholds too.
When, stepping o'er a mosshole in his haste,
He plunged into the quagmire, to the waist.

One spring he gave, the heather to regain,
But sank back deeper in the ooze again.
And higher rose the water; chill and brown;
His bulky specimens still dragged him down.
Though but waist-deep when first he tumbled in,
The mixture soon had risen to his chin.
And so he might have foundered in the bog,
And lain for ages; like a moss-oak log;
Steeped in the antiseptic; doomed to grace
In future years, some relic hunter's case;
And be a subject for the tongue or pen
Of some old rusty antiquarian then;
—If such exist then—but he did not drown.
A happy thought possessed him; reaching down,
He emptied all his ballast; 'twas short work,
And bounded upward, buoyant as a cork,
Grasped a stout ling bush in each muddy hand,
And soon stood, dripping, on the firmer land.
Then, wet, but lighter far than he had come,
He left the moss forever; and went home.

Though often since, I've heard old relics say
He lost some splendid specimens that day,
Yet take the counsel that he gave to me;
All ye of special tastes whate'er they be,
Let reason hold the rein o'er wild desire,
Nor ride, like him, your hobby in the mire.

1867.

IN THE ENGLISH LAKE DISTRICT.

I went the English Lakes to see.
  Also, the mountains to explore.
Summer was there ahead of me;
  For June had come, the week before.

I stopped at Keswick, for a spell,
  And spelled it, by the Greta River.
But Greta's beauty who shall tell?
  Its spell will last at least, forever.

Great Skiddaw crawled beneath my feet.
  Shivering I stood, a lonely speck
Upon the summit, in the sleet;
  With both my feet upon his neck.

Grey-haired with mist, Helvellyn slept.
  Making a pillow of The Naddle.
Old Saddleback, beside me crept;
  I almost leaped into the saddle.

A temple old I went to see;
  Lone circle of the Druid's day.
Not even time's geometry,
  Can square the circle quite away.

Where Derwentwater's waters break,
  I watched them; from the Friar's Cliff.
Rowed 'round the islands in the lake,
  As escort of the "Countess" skiff.

I traced the road along the shore,
And wandered up the lovely vale.
I heard the water at Lodore,
And entered into Borrowdale.

Thy mountain gorge, and crag so high,
Great Honister, I saw. Alas!
That morn I little thought, that I
Would ever come to such a pass.

Below, was gloomy Buttermere.
A deep dark lake so lone and still;
And just beyond its waters clear,
—By all poetic—Sourmilk Gill.

The mountains rose, a mighty mass.
A wild road led me from the plain.
I followed 'till it came to pass,
And passed to Keswick back again.

And on the way, I heard them sing;
The pretty streams of Newlands Vale.
And might have heard the Catbells ring,
Before I came to Portinscale.

Sweet scenes. I left them with regret.
Clear streams, where crystal waters eddy,
Your freshness comes to cheer me yet.
But, bless the cook. The dinner's ready.

1867.

SEATOLLER.

I passed through the hamlet Seatoller.
And over the great mountain gate.
Where I saw the wild men of the crags,
Who burrow for Borrowdale slate.

There, hundreds of feet up aloft,
They work on the cliff bare and brown.
How they got there, I never could guess;
But I saw how the creatures come down.

For a man started off from the top,
With an armful of slates, on a hurdle,
And came down the hill, at a speed
That made my blood thicken, and
curdle—almost.

To take the same ride on his sled,
I am sure you would not be particular.
For the path where he made the descent,
Was all but sheer perpendicular.

And when he had come to the bottom,
And stood in the talus, a-calling,
He held out his hand, as they all do,
As if I should pay him for falling.

And while I went over the pass,
That climbs from the vale at Seatoller,
I wondered what men would not do;
To acquire the almighty—shilling.

1867.

CROQUET.

Some men will laugh over life's little game;
And winning, or losing, laugh ever the same.
Some, like the frogs, still keep croaking away;
Even presuming to croak at croquet.

Old Mr. Shoddy, comes home from the town,
Bringing for practice, young Codfish, or Brown.
Contriving to startle the whole of the set,
By twisting croquet, 'till it rhymes with coquette.

Surly old bachelor, quite hard to match,
Says the game was invented a husband to catch.
And gives such a chance pretty feet to display,
'Tis no wonder the ladies all dote on croquet.

Tender Miss Wicket, a square cannot tramp.
Yet plays like a man, though the lawn may be damp
With the dew of the night, or the rain of the day.
For health and enjoyment both spring from croquet.

Young Dr. Mallet, can't walk down the street,
Without an umbrella, to keep off the heat.
But all the day long, unshaded, will play.
Proving the vigor derived from croquet.

Then hail we thy author; whatever his name,
And hail we thyself, too; dear frivolous game.
Through life, if misfortune should roll in our way,
May we still have the skill to roquet, and croquet.

1868.

THE FOOL'S SONG.

I'm a fool, and I know it; but what of that?
Fools live longer than wise men do.
If care killed fools, as it did the cat,
'Twould have finished me, long since; and may be, you.
'Tis contrast makes the wise, and the wiser.
If all were Solons, it wouldn't be nice.
For each one would wish to play the adviser,
And no one would need to take the advice.

I'm a fool, and I know it; I never could learn
To do as the crowds do, and hurry along.
Life's up-hill road has many a turn;
And I like to know if I'm right or I'm wrong.
We'll reach the end of it soon enough.
Why should we crowd, and elbow, and thrust?
I grow footsore; the way is so rough.
And beside, I'm not anxious to get there first.

I'm a fool, and I know it; I like romance.
I've sought it, and found it profusely—in books.
I like a "faire ladye with witching glance."
And if she's good-looking, I like her looks.
Woman to me is a queer enigma.
Long its solution puzzled my head.
Now I give it up; and I don't care a fig; may
She still continue unriddled, unread.

I'm a fool, and I know it; but never mind.
Envy can pick with a fool no quarrels.
Fame may leave him a mile behind.
Better a bare head, than guilty laurels.
A fool may laugh, and a fool may sing.
Sages see nothing a fool may not see.
A fool, when dead, is as good as a king;
And while living, has plenty of company.

1868.

WAUSEON.

Half asleep, I sat perusing
A paper; stupid, blurred.
While the train's uneasy motion
Seemed to loosen every word.
The cushioned seat before me,
Held an angel; robed in lawn.
And I gleaned her destination
From her ticket; Wauseon.

An exchange of quiet glances,
  Led to quite a pleasant chat
On the country, and the fashions,
  Fellow-travelers, and all that.
Thus an hour passed, like the stations;
  While the engine rattled on
Toward that little Buckeye village,
  Indian-titled, Wauseon.

Blue her eyes were, fair her hair
  Hung in clustered masses dense.
And unlike the doll of fashion,
  She could talk with common sense.
Thinking what a wife she'd make me,
  To waste spare cash upon,
I became completely captive;
  Long ere reaching Wauseon.

In my somewhat scant experience,
  I had loved perhaps a score.
Deeming each succeeding charmer
  Dearer far than all before.
For the splendor of the sunset,
  Is forgotten at the dawn—
Loudly shrieked the hateful whistle,
  And we stopped, at Wauseon.

I helped her to the platform,
  Where a young moustache she met.
And a mutual kiss resulted,
  Which my thoughts re-echo yet.
They, in accents so familiar,
  Called each other, "Mary!" "John!"
Mad, I turned away, and left them;
  And the train left Wauseon.

I was sold, and at a bargain.
  I was silly, not to know,
That the woman must be married,
  Who could talk and charm me so.
'Twas another fond illusion,
  That had risen, and was gone.
But I—nonsense—I'll forget her;
  And that stupid Wauseon.

P. S. It is only fair, to state
  That my guessing, all was rash.
'Twas her brother; not her husband,
  Who owned the blonde moustache.
Now, she jointly claims another;
  For we two, she says, are one.
And she thinks it very handsome.
  N. B. Our address is, "Wauseon."

1868.

WAITING AT THE DOOR.

Close by your side I am sitting;
Safe from the storm and the gloom.
Brightly the firelight is flitting
Over the cosy old room.
Hand clasped in hand, we are waiting
Here, at the door of our life;
And, musing, I gaze on the woman
To-morrow will bring for my wife.

Will she grow dearer, and dearer
Still, as the years take their flight?
Will she redeem in the future,
All she has pledged me to-night?
Time, with its wonderful changes,
Will wear youth and passion away;
But I gaze in the eyes of my darling,
And know she will love me for aye.

Backward my thoughts have been going,
Far through the mists of the past.
Back where youth's sunshine is glowing,
Back where its shadows were cast.
'Till sunshine and shade intermingled,
Have faded from memory's view,
And thought, like a tide that is flowing,
Returns to the present, and you.

Life will have trials and sorrows,
No one its storms may foretell;
But mixed with its tempest and trouble,
Come flowers and gladness as well.
Foes, in the flesh and the spirit,
Will tempt us, to compass our fall;
But loving, and trusting, my darling,
We'll meet them, and conquer them all.

1869.

CARPET RAGS.

Close by the kitchen window,
In the midst of balls and bags,
Flo. sits clipping and sewing;
Emblem of "pride in rags."

Red-armed Sim. on the doorstep,
Heedless of corn and hoe,
Looks at the fair chiffonier,
And watches the rag pile grow.

And linen, or woolen, or cotton,
Alike, she tears or clips.
And masculine shirts, and feminine skirts,
Add to the mountain of strips.

Sim. gazes over the river;
  At the Catskills; smoky blue;
But his thoughts are of the fingers;
  Now joining the old to the new.

And he wonders, if their owner,
  Of his raveled and ragged life,
Could weave a passable carpet;
  And would furnish its warp, as his wife.

O simple Sim.; she seemeth
  Meek as the blossoms of spring;
But I fear she'll lead you a pretty dance;
  For she knows you are on her string.

You, and a dozen others,
  Are quoted hers on call;
And little she cares, while winding her rags,
  That she winds your heart in the ball.

1870.

A NEW BROTHERHOOD.

Who is an Orangeman? Who is a Jacobite?
  Here in Columbia, where all men are free.
Where he may who will, follow church rite, or Popish rite;

Chainless of conscience, and titheless of fee.
This stream is the Hudson; not Boyne's bonny water;
James, here, or William, the sword may not draw,
'Derry or Limerick to redden with slaughter.
There are no kings here, but order, and law.

Shame on you, Orangeman, shame on you Jacobite.
Freedom may blush for such bigots as you.
Loud was your wail, when oppressed by the tyrant's might.
Freed from his grasp, you would tyrannize too.
Heaven save from Erin, the fate you would bring her;
Bound though she be 'neath the lion's red paw.
Better that strangers should trample and wring her,
Than sons, who are strangers to order and law.

No longer Orangemen, no longer Jacobites,
Strive to recover the prestige you've lost.
Perish forever your feuds and your faction fights.
Bury the past, in the ocean you've crossed.
Spurn not the welcome this new land will offer.
Kindness can heal all hate's wounds deep and raw.
Grasp each the hand that the other shall offer,
And swear to support here, but order, and law.

1871.

PALM SUNDAY.

Pattering feet, on a stony road.
  Road that mine have trodden so oft'.
Little arms grasping a waxen load
  Of willow catkins; downy and soft.
Little pilgrims, sandaled and shorn,
Gathering palms, this Sunday morn.

Rosy-cheeked lads, in their tartan caps.
  Dimpled lassies, with aprons white.
Blossoms in arms, and blossoms in laps.
  Red hands gather, and grasp them tight.
Misers each; of a golden store,
That costs not honor, tears, or gore.

I look and smile at their childish joy,
  As they come from the green crusade.
And try to picture a brown-haired boy,
  And a fair little palmer maid;
Gathering palms from yon willow hedge,
That still leans over the burn's edge.

The brown-haired boy to a man has grown.
  Other palms he has won and worn.
And now, he stands by the burn alone.
  The maiden, years ago, was borne
To gather, in that fairer day,
Palms that never will fade away.

And if I alone, and unheeded, tread
This stony road, 'tis without regret.
For though youth has vanished, and mates are dead,
There are those who will greet and cheer me yet.
And I've learned to-day, that flowers still grow,
'Round memory's birthplace—Long Ago.

RETURNING.

Mother, I come; your nightly prayers
For my return, are heard at last.
Forgive the many anxious cares,
My wanderings caused you, in the past.

Forgive the sleepless dreary night,
That brought the moaning of the sea.
The dreams that ended in affright;
The thoughts that pictured ill to me.

I did not wish to give you pain,
I was not weary of my home,
When from your side I went again,
Alone, through distant lands to roam.

I did not vainly hope to find,
  On that far isle that gave me birth,
Scenes fairer than I left behind;
  There are no fairer on the earth.

But there were fields and camps, that yet
  Bear the rough marks of sanguine strife.
Where warlike races struggling met,
  And hostile nations fought for life.

And there were cities of the past,
  And moated castles, mossed and gray,
And sculptured abbeys, dim and vast,
  Where men grow famous in decay.

All these for ages there had been,
  And I had learned each storied name;
And knew the changes they had seen;
  Their tales of glory and of shame.

And I had wished each scene to view.
  To gather relics from their mold.
To see the splendor of the new,
  To learn the glory of the old.

And I forsook the dear home life,
  To find, upon that other shore,
Its contrast, in the reckless strife;
  And learn to prize its quiet more.

And I have met with friendly hands,
  And kindly welcomes where I went.
And I have seen those strange old lands;
  Seen them, and now I am content.

Mother, I come; my weary feet
  Have roamed the shores beyond the main;
Yet I have heard no words so sweet,
  As thine; that greet me back again

1871.

REST.

Far from the turmoil of the dusty street,
  I wander by the margin of the stream.
Where overhead, the leafy branches meet,
  And through the rifts, warm rays of sunshine gleam.

No sounds can reach the ear but those that soothe.
  The notes of birds, the water's plashing song.
How pure and sweet the air; the grass how smooth.
  How far away seem care, and greed, and wrong.

Dear mother nature; 'mid such scenes as this,
  Tired heads may nestle on thy verdant breast.
Life's ills will vanish at thy loving kiss,
  And in their place, come hope, and peace, and rest.

MAFFET'S DRIVER.

Ride, stranger? Well jump in.
Goin' to Shamburg, so be I.
Queer kind o' sloppy weather it's been;
Drink? 'Bliged to you. Aint dry.

Steele? Yes sir. Know Johnny well.
Heard his story through and through.
Teamed on the Creek for quite a spell.
Plain a man as me; or you.

A fool for luck. Go long, I say.
Light out, you rats, and earn your fodder.
Rich old uncle died one day,
Left him a farm, and lots of sodder.

Farm was riddled with wells you know.
Quarter royalty came to Steele.
Wells don't flow like they used to flow.
Mind yon hole! That tries a wheel.

Worth? Five hundred thousand plum.
Some say double; but that'll do.
Only twenty, and green, and dumb,
What odds for figures. It soon went through.

A life in the city, and women, and wine,
And cards, and diamonds, and horses and dogs,
A score of suckers, with nests to line,
That's how it went. O curse the logs.

Johnny's got back on the Creek again.
Drives for Maffet. You wouldn't dream
He'd ever done anything else. Ho! Jane;
There's Maffet now; and this is his team.

1871.

THE RIDDLE OF KING JOHN.

On his chestnut steed King John doth sit.
Riding away to the South.
But strange to tell, the golden bit,
Is in the king's own mouth.

O fast and hard King John doth ride.
And his steed he labors sore.
He travels to countries far and wide;
Spain, and China, and many beside;
Though he never leaves the door.

He builds fair towns through his wide domain;
And his ships sail to and fro.
In many a battle he counts his slain;
Though he never had a foe.

His towns are builded with wooden blocks;
And his ships sail in gutter pools.
And the battles wherein he gives such knocks,
Are fought with chairs and stools.

His chestnut steed, is a chestnut stick.
And the bit, is gingerbread.
King John, is our little catch-me-quick;
And thus, the riddle is read.

1876.

SONG—BE A MAN.

Be a man; where'er you go.
Do your best, and never falter.
Bravely facing every foe,
Hurl them down, and pass them by.
Scorn a sham, and hate a lie;
Help the weak, whene'er you can,
Cowards falter, cringe, and cry;
Do not heed them; be a man.

Life has many a weary hill
Gaily climb them; do not worry.
Patience wins, as well as skill.
Every prize is yours to gain.
If you use both hand and brain,
You may soon be in the van
Honest labor leaves no stain,
Do the right, and be a man.

Titled fools may rule the state.
  Wealth may come without the earning.
Only honest men are great.
  Only truth is always right.
Though your way seem dark as night,
  You are part of nature's plan.
Time will bring the welcome light.
  Strive; have courage; be a man.

ADRIFT.

Sail on, my boat, sail on;
  O'er ocean's pulsing blue.
From earliest flush of dawn,
  'Till stars their light renew.

Sail from the cliffy shore;
  Leave man's vile town astern.
I would tread his streets no more,
  And all his ways unlearn.

Bear me from all the strife,
  And hate, and sin, and pride.
From tongues that poison life;
  While love, to love is denied.

Bear me where billows gleam,
And play in the morning sun.
Where circling sea-gulls scream,
There let my rest be won.

There let me rock and float,
Like a bird in a billowy nest.
Safe in my sheltering boat,
There let me dream, and rest.

Severed from all my kind;
Sailing ever on, and on,
'Till a haven at last I find,
Where this life blends with yon.

1867.

TO HELEN.

O neighbor sweet, across the street,
Upon your doorstep, young and free,
My heart grows light, to hear you greet
With songs and words, the morn, and me.
If I am weary, dull, and sad,
Your pleasant smile, your sweet refrain,
Make care ashamed; 'till I am glad;
And life seems bright and fair again.

O neighbor sweet, the birds repeat
Their songs, upon the leafy spray.
And you, so modest, calm and neat,
Seem less oppressed by cares, than they.
Friends bless you, with unspoken words.
Each little duty, lightly goes.
Your day has songs, and flowers, and birds;
And night brings only sweet repose.

O neighbor sweet, the years are fleet.
What will they bring for you, and me?
Would that unchanged, across the street,
Your gladsome presence still might be.
Were I to miss it, much I fear,
Life would to me be less complete.
But come what will; may each fresh year
Bring you new blessings; neighbor sweet.

1891.

SONG—NAN MACREE.

When I was single, I lived with my mother.
And both were as happy as we could be.
I never knew trouble, until I saw double.
And that came through meeting with Nan Macree.

O Nan, she was slender, and fair as a flower.
They say she had baited her hook for me.
She laughed, and she smiled, and she sang by the hour,
'Till I could see nothing but Nan Macree.

But when I'd grown bolder, I laughed, and I told her
Our names seem to rhyme; 'tis Magee, Macree.
But I don't like your name; so let's just change the same,
Sure the change will be little to Nan Magee.

And so we were married; and went to my mother.
I thought the wee house would have room for three.
But it soon grew so warm, that to save further harm,
She turned out my mother; did Nan Magee.

And into her place, she brought her own mother.
And the two of them make it so pleasant for me,
That I wish I was dead; or, rather, instead,
I wish my wife's name was still Nan Macree.

THE GHOST OF SQUAW HOLLOW.

The night was sultry, and the moon was full;
So too was Hutler; but he still had strength
To walk, and take at intervals, a pull
Of nectar from his carboy; but at length,
Discouraged at the wideness of the way,
With legs and mind a-tangle, down he lay.

Oft' had he wandered in the selfsame plight;
And oft' collapsed into a heap like that.
The road wound half way up the mountain height.
Below, beside the stream, a wooded flat,
Now hid by clouds, that close the moon did follow,
Was known through all that region as "Squaw Hollow."

Here in the Indian days, when all the braves,
Did tramp the war path, bent to scalp and steal,
They hid their squaws, amid these woods and caves;
With little sign their presence to reveal.
Deeming them safer here, from raid and pillage,
Than in the open grounds around their village.

And here in Hutler's time, the people said,
A ghost arrayed in white, did nightly walk.
Making belated travelers afraid,
And furnishing the gossips all with talk.
'Twas seen they said, near Selder's ruined mill;
Or roamed among the hemlocks on the hill.

Now Hutler's wife, although an unbeliever
In spooks and ghosts, that frighten and allure,
So much her spouse's drunken ways did grieve her,
Determined she would try to work his cure.
So when he came not with his liquid load,
She seized a sheet, and started down the road.

She crossed o'er Moosewood Run upon a log.
By Dinkey Island, with its spectral trees.
She passed the poison sumac, by the bog,
Where Crazy Sam. one Christmas night did freeze.
Then climbed the hill where stands the blasted oak,
Near Yoney's cabin where the screech owls croak.

And now she hears the wing-dam's drowsy roar,
And sees the fire-tipped furnace stacks beyond.
While far beneath her, near the rocky shore,
Was the old mill-race; now a slimy pond;
Where minks and muskrats, from the rushes peep,
Where bullfrogs bellow, and black lizards creep.

The night was dark by this time, not like ink,
But light enough to see strange towering shapes.
If they were trees, or stumps, one yet might think
They looked like ghosts, or goblins, bears or apes.
And Hutler's wife, though bold enough at starting,
Now found her courage very fast departing.

She stumbled on, then stopped; for now she saw
  Upon the road, recumbent in a heap,
A form uncouth, that filled her soul with awe,
  But which, in truth, was Hutler; fast asleep.
Her ghostly raiment, o'er her form she spread,
And 'round him walked with slow and solemn tread.

Her cough sepulchral, sounds upon his ears.
  He wakes, and on his elbow props his head.
With eyes unsteady at the ghost he peers,
  And gruffly asks, "why don't you go to bed."
Slowly, with hollow tones she thus addresses
Her spouse whose drunken form the soft mud presses.

"I am the Devil, 'that's so;' responded he.
  "I've come to take you where there's no more drink.
Your worthless drunken soul belongs to me;"
  But here she ceased to speak, almost to think.
For now she sees, benumbed with terror dread,
The real ghost slow advance with waving head.

Perhaps,'twas only Whinrey's white horse "Dragon."
  But Mrs. Hutler could not curb her fear.
Screeching, each bush and tree she leaves a rag on;
  As off she bounds, more fleet than frightened deer.
While Hutler, heartless unregenerate brute,
Yelled, "go it Nance, he's gainin', blast ye; scoot."

Hutler long since exoded; so too Nancy.
Old Whinrey's "Dragon," and the other ghost.
The furnace stacks, the wing-dam too, I fancy,
Are now a dim-lined memory, at most,
And but for this, my halting rhyme, I wot,
Squaw Hollow, and its ghost, would be forgot.

1891.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL PICNIC.

I went with Harry, and laughing Lou,
And strapping Charley, and Anna, and Em.;
And we passed by Polk, and Raymilton too;
All Presbyterians—*pro tem.*

Happy and young on a picnic bent,
Free as the trout in yon shaded pool;
And this is the way that day we went
To Sandy Lake with the Sunday-school.

The train swung winding on, like this;—
But if its motion was fast or slow,
I was so wholly lost in bliss,
So hot and happy, I did not know.

The girl who sat in the seat with me,
Just as you sit, my daughter, to-day;
My fairy princess seemed to be,
And we to our kingdom were riding away.

'Tis true, the sun had freckled her face,
And her hair was very golden, indeed;
And her nose turned up somewhat in its place,
But if I knew it, I did not heed.

For in all the train-load, she was my choice;
And she, so pleased with herself and me,
Nestled closely to hear my voice
While I told of the time when I saw the sea.

And Harry and Lou, and Charley and Em,
Seemed affected the self-same way;
The crowd was a void to us, and to them,
As we laughed and perspired that August day.

But time and the train moved on while we talked,
For there was the lake so glaring and still;
And with basket between us we leisurely walked.
In the wake of the throng to yon shady hill.

'Twas pleasant to sit on the cool damp moss,
After hanging our hats on the fragrant boughs;
And little we counted of profit or loss,
For had we not come to the woods to browse?

On the usual picnic fare we fared;
Bread and butter, and pickles and pie,
And chicken, and cake, and we even dared
The picnic lemonade to try.

Then we played croquet by the shaded spring,
And Anna cheated—the little imp;
And we boys pushed the girls on the old rope swing,
'Till collars were wilted and coats were limp.

'Tis twenty years and more since then;
And we six are wedded who then were free,
And some of our children are women and men,
But our picnic mating was not to be.

For a man from the West with money to spare,
And twice my age, made Anna his bride;
And her tilting nose and her freckles and hair,
In her son are enlarged and intensified.

And the Anna who sits in the seat with me,
Is not the Anna who once sat there;
And this is no Calvinistic spree,
But we follow the crowd to a County Fair.

1892.

A PROPHECY.

There's a cry comes from far-off Hawaii,
Where the natives are lazy and jaw-y,
Where the men are high steppers,
And they've Chinese and lepers,
And where titles are spotted and flaw-y.

It was there Captain Cook joined a club;
While the clubbers said "aye, there's the rub."
  Then they smote him with stones,
  And they broke all his bones,
And Cook was then cooked into grub.

In the shade of the lofty banana,
The gospel men sing their hosannah;
  There's a mighty volcano,
  That may soon spout again O,
And Claus Spreckles picks up the manna.

They'd a queen, who seemed pretty well fixed,
But conditions are now so much mixed,
  That Liliuokalani,
  (That's worse than plain Nanny,)
Is a queen, with a big EX, prefixed.

And some say, "Hurrah; let's annex her,"
And some say, "the queen, 'twould perplex her,"
  While some say, 'don't do it,'
  If you do, you will rue it,
There's England; you know it would vex her."

If once we should cross the Pacific,
Annexation's a mighty specific,
  The eagle will flop,
  No one knows where he'd stop;
And his scream would be loud and terrific.

Now how will it end? all this flurry;
What will come of the scheming and worry?
Annexation is certain,
But don't rush the curtain,
Let us know we are right; there's no hurry.

1893.

THE MAN THAT POUNDS THE STAMPS ON.

There are many kinds of blundering fools,
That we are forced to meet;
And the rank perennial idiot,
Naught can banish or defeat.
But worst of all, the very man
Justice should put the clamps on,
Is the king and champion of them all,
The man that pounds the stamps on.

Some cleanly men, afraid of stamps,
Refuse outright to lick them;
So do the work by proxy
And compel their clerks to stick them.
Some, to avoid the microbes
Use a sponge to put the damp on;
But his big calf's tongue licks the gum,
And then he pounds the stamp on.

Some evening at the Grand Hotel,
You're scribbling at a letter,
It may be to your girl, or wife,
Your creditor, or debtor.
When bang, you think a battering ram,
Your head begins to tamp on,
As the outcast swings his giant fist,
And pounds a helpless stamp on.

You start and yell, your flying pen,
Sticks quivering in the floor;
Your recent spotless shirt front
With ink is spattered o'er.
'Twould not be worse, if ink-shod flies,
Your paper fair did camp on.
While innocent, unconscious
Sits, the fiend who pounds the stamp on.

Some day, the sluggish fool-killer
Will smite him on the hip;
Or else, the gun unloaded
Will get him in its grip;
And while the earth above his grave,
Some hapless victim tramps on,
We'll pray, that no one else may come
Like him, to pound the stamps on.

1894.

WHY?

Why do we long for that which may not be?
Why strive against the fate we cannot mend?
Why start us in the race, poor you and me,
If naught we do can help or change the end?

If one a bird would fly the forest o'er,
And one secluded, likes to nest at home;
Why bind them each to each, forevermore?
Why this one wait, and that one dread to come?

If I love beauty, whersoe'er it be,
In sky, or sea, in mountain, bird, or flower;
And if sweet sounds have captive made of me,
And thrill my heart-strings with their gentle power,

And thou art beautiful, and thy sweet voice
Makes wondrous music to my trancéd ear;
Why may I not at sight of thee rejoice?
Why close my ears, that fain thy voice would hear?

The spirit chafes among insensate things;
Bound to a clod, when it would all aspire;
Why was it furnished with its soaring wings,
To trail their beauty in the common mire?

Sometime, perchance, the mire will stain no more;
Sometime this cruel struggling will cease;
Sometime, we trust, the spirit freed, will soar,
Where all is joy, and light, and calm, and peace.

FINGERS IN THE PIE.

When at home a child I dwelt,
An uncouth Hibernian Celt
  Did duty in our kitchen, for a season.
O'er her ways, that we regretted,
My mother pined, and fretted;
  And to change those ways, with her would
    sometimes reason.
Did she bake, or did she baste,
She would often lick and taste,
  And thus ascertain the flavors, on the sly.
And I've seen her at her cooking,
When she thought no one was looking,
  Even stick her stubby finger in the pie.
Though I was but a midget,
You may think it made me fidget,
When I chanced to see our Bridget
  Insert her foremost digit in the pie.

All through life, this class of cattle,
With their actions, or their tattle,
  Their fingers or their tongues, will still persist
To thrust in our affairs,
Ever adding to our cares,
  When they might far better, comfort, and
    assist.
If at home they have no pie

To probe in and to try,
  Why need they come our cooking all to spoil?
Why do they pry and meddle?
Why falsehoods make and peddle,
  And keep far better people in a broil?
They're just like our Bridget Flynn,
As slyly they begin to poke their fingers in,
Let the crust be thick, or thin,
  And spoil in this way, other people's pie.

Take this advice, my friend,
To your own affairs attend;
  Or, if you do for others, do your best;
If you bravely act the man,
Always do the best you can,
  You may safely trust to heaven for the rest.
If you hear a lying tale,
Promptly through it drive a nail;
  Do not wait until some friend its fang has smitten.
If your fingers itch to meddle,
If your tongue inclines to peddle,
  You had best on tongue and fingers put a mitten.
If you meddle, you will rue it,
If you lie, you can't undo it,
Honest folks will soon see through it,
Tongue and fingers, if you do it,
  May strike into a superheated pie.

PLEASE REMIT.

When the language of fashion we speak,
'Tis curious how formal one gets;
I sent an old bill to a debtor last week,
And the billee just sent—his regrets.

FOSSILS.

Last week we went a-fossiling where now the snow
lies glistening.
With a leather sack, our plunder home to bring;
And hammers geological, and, if you had been listening,
Perhaps you might have heard those hammers ring.

We searched for petrifactions illustrating fossil botany;
Among old diluvian drift rocks, worn and spent.
And I'll tell you what we found, if you'll pardon the
monotony
Of their telescopic names that can't be bent.

There were great Lepidodendrons, with scars that
seemed to vary a
Great deal from each other; both in shape and size;
And chips of Sigillaria, and queer chunks of Stigmaria,
Having round dots with fringes, looking just like
eyes.

And the axis of Cordaites, that resembles an Orthoceras,
And specimens with leaf-scars like a human phiz;
And a plant Ulodendron-ish, with horns like a rhinoceros;
And much I'd like to know just what it is.

There were stems of Halonia, and pinnae of Caulopteris,
And some Syringodendron prints likewise we saw;
And another fern impression, perhaps of a Pecopteris,
And the archean joke, about the mother-in-law.

Coming home we met a woman with features interrogative,
Who asked what composed our seeming precious grist;
I told her they were fossil plants, and claiming my prerogative,
Showed her the longest-named one on the list.

She looked at me from head to feet, and also at the specimen,
Looked at both of us again, and then did say;
While I thought her eyes did twink, though they soon became serene again,
"Tell me, Mr. Fussil man, which is the fussil; eh?"

1894.

HELIOTROPE.

My love passed by you, O charming Rose;
(Flower of all flowers, is the rose to me).
Though your pink is the hue on her cheek that glows,
(Softer her cheek than your petals can be).

My love passed by you, O Lily fair;
(Her throat is white as your rays of snow).
But she drank of your perfume, dainty and rare,
Be glad, for she loves you, Lily, I know.

My love stooped low by the mossy nook,
Where you hide, unhidden, sweet Violet;
And a flower, and a glossy leaf she took,
Were you not proud, at her throat to be set?

O charming Rose, she is charming too—
And fairer than Lily on garden slope;
And sweeter far, than the Violet blue,
My flower of all maidens—my Heliotrope.

HOW THE EARTH WAS MADE.

When the earth was hot and new,
And through space it flaming flew,
'Twas but a cosmic fireball,
Where nothing lived or grew.

There was nitrogen and hydrogen,
But neither birds, nor beasts, nor men;
No protoplasm to evolve,
No exogen, no endogen.

When countless cycles older,
Her atmosphere grew colder;
But mist, and fog, and rain and steam,
And clouds, and gas, enrolled her.

On the surface formed a crust,
Like a thin celestial rust;
Which slowly hardened into stone,
With neither soil nor dust.

And this crust, so frail and thin,
Often broke and fell within
The molten, seething, central mass,
With thunderous awful din.

Then another boundless term,
And the thickening shell grew firm;
And mist and fog, came down in rain,
And soaked earth's epiderm.

Thus ocean's floods were formed;
And then they raged and stormed;
  But whence came salt to season them,
We have not been informed.

So great was the commotion,
That the torrents of the ocean
  Swept o'er the land from side to side,
And caused immense erosion.

This disintegrated rock,
Made by elemental shock,
  Became in time, the fertile soil,
And earth was ripe to stock.

Then germs and seeds appear;
Whether from far or near
  We do not know; but plants, and trees,
Their stems and trunks uprear.

Through all earth's warm moist area,
Grew giant Calamaria;
  Tree Ferns, and Palms, and Cycads huge,
Lepidodendrons, Sigillaria.

And birds, and beasts, were there;
So monstrous, strange, and rare;
  Their forms so odd, and names so long.
Make modern man to stare.

Pterodactyl, Megatherium,
Plesiosaurus, Dinotherium;
They walked, and swam, and flew,
and fought,
In murderous wild delirium.

And man came on the scene;
Not with his lordly mien,
But hairy, wild, rapacious,
Of aspect fierce and mean.

From stronger beasts he fled;
On weaker beasts, he fed;
In darksome caves, with club in hand,
A struggling life he led.

Again long ages passed;
And earth has reached at last,
The present time; while backward, we
Look down time's vistas vast.

So in this brief narration,
To date, I've brought creation,
You know now of earth's genesis,
From this my revelation.

SONG.

THE BRAW NEW SHOON.

Where gat ye the braw new shoon laddie?
Where gat ye the braw new shoon?
I gat them frae a pedder lad;
Just as the sun gaed down.
He was waitin' by the bogle stane,
To hear the cushat croon;
He was sittin' by the bogle stane,
Mindin' the cushat croon.

An' what ga'e ye for the shoon laddie?
O what ga'e ye for the shoon?
I caimed his hair wi' an iron caim;
'Till the reed swat ran down.
And I left him there beside the burn,
Amang the bracken brown;
I left him sleepin' by the burn,
Amang the bracken brown.

O wae's me for the shoon laddie;
Wae's me but I rue the shoon;
The judge will say the fearsome words,
Donned in black cap and goon.
An' ravens croak, an' flap their wings,
The gallows tree aboon;
An' ravens flap their eerie wings,
The gallows tree aboon.

What ha'e ye deun wi' my shoon lassie?
What ha'e ye deun wi' my shoon?
I left them baith at Rab MacGill's
When I gaed to the town.
An' I've gitten a cog o' barley bree,
An' we'll gar our sorrow droon;
I've gitten a cog o' barley bree,
To gar our sorrow droon.

1814.

O stop your bragging, Jonathan,
And leave John Bull in peace;
And do not pull the lion's tail,
But seek some other game.
Remember eighteen fourteen,
And let your boasting cease,
And, unless you have forgotten how,
Bend low your head with shame.

The British came to Washington,
And took and burned the place;
While our forces, set to drive them back,
Ran off, with scarce a fight.
Before or since, no troops of ours
E'er brought us such disgrace,
'Twere better had they fighting died,
Than made that coward's flight.

Then cease your boasting, Jonathan,
Somewhat more modest be;
You may be rich and powerful,
But men will find that out.
We are proud of what our navy did,
Those days, on lake and sea,
But nothing ever can wipe out
That one disgraceful rout.

THE GUMMERS.

I went into a dry goods store,
To buy a strand of calico;
And to the floor-tramper said
Pray tell me, sir, where shall I go?
He called a salesmaid to my side,
But I think I almost struck him dumb,
When I said, pray call another lass;
This one, you see, is chewing gum.

I like to see a business man
Or woman, fit for business;
I like to see a working man,
Attired in a working dress;
If any such must speak to me,
Their words they're apt to mumble some,
If while their talk they're talking,
They persist in chewing chewing gum.

I went into a railroad car,
To go to Punxsutawney town;
The pair of jaws in front of me,
Persistently moved up and down;
Sideways, across, and partners change,
I fled into the smoker's slum,
For I'd rather soak tobacco smoke,
Than watch a woman chewing gum.

If hunger gnaws the Latin parts,
Gyrating jaws one may excuse,
Or if car-sickness tackeleth,
Some sympathy one can't refuse.
If some one has St. Vitus' dance,
Involuntary movements come,
But I'd rather see sea-sickness far,
Than see sick people chewing gum.

I went into a school one day,
To hear a science class recite,
And some were masticating gum,
Whereat I grew disgusted quite.
If I had been the teacher there,
To class they never should have come,
If instead of cramming recitation,
They crammed their mouths with chewing gum.

Biology, and Physics too,
  Require brains to comprehend;
There are no brains behind the jaws
  Where all their efforts seemed to end.
A Spirogyra I would be,
  Amoeba, Paramecium;
Before I'd throw away my wits,
  And gnash my teeth and chew the gum.

And once I went into the court,
  And noted in the witness chair,
The target of commenting eyes,
  A woman sat, with pinkish hair.
She should have hung her head in shame,
  There in the crowded courtroom's hum;
But modesty was not her name.
  She told her tale while chewing gum.

If in the stillness of the night,
  When sleep her drowsy curtain draws,
Some thoughtless gummer should retire
  With waxen cud within her jaws;
And if in her esophagus,
  Should drop the hunk of jumbo jum,
Which there should stick and strangle her,
  There'd be one fewer chewing gum.

We all should duly chew our food;
And some sometimes their words must chew;
Some choose to spend their money good,
For stinking plug, and chew it too.
And slangy ones will "chew the rag,"
When they had better far be mum.
But of all the vulgar foolishness,
No chewing equals chewing gum.

O man and woman, lad and lass,
Strive ever for the better life;
Use well the moments as they pass,
And help each other in the strife.
Be cleanly, kind, considerate;
Though you have only crust and crumb,
And never join the idiot band,
Whose task is gumming chewing gum.

ENGLAND.

You may tell of glorious England;
Of dear romantic England;
The swarming-hive of colonies,
Mother of nations grand.
Of her hedges green with hawthorn,
Of the primrose pale beneath them,
Of the beauty of her waters,
And the fatness of her land.

You may speak of abbeys olden,
  Where kings and heroes slumber;
Of church-spires on the hillsides
  Pointing dumbly to the sky.
Of old and stately castles,
  With their wealth of park and forest;
And of towns and teeming cities,
  That within her valleys lie.

You may sing about her lakes,
  And the mountains rising o'er them;
With their purple tops reflected
  From the water smooth and still.
Of the scarlet-beaded holly,
  The pink and fragrant heather,
That glitter in the lowland,
  And that glorify the hill.

But the pink bloom of the heather
  Has been splashed with deeper crimson;
Ebbing out from wounded bosoms
  Of men who were her sons.
Men who only reached to take
  Of the gifts that nature proffered;
Defying hated, class-made laws,
  Enforced by hireling guns.

And the waters of her lakes,
  Have been deeper tinged by slaughter;
And the mountains have looked sadly down
  On many a gory field.
Where Britons slew the foemen,
  Or where Briton strove with Briton;
While the gloomy crags re-echoed
  The clang of sword and shield.

And the fatness of her land,
  Is the fruit of death's red harvest;
When over it the battle tide
  Swept onward, like a flood.
And the plough turns up the yellow skulls,
  Gleanings of war's reaping;
And the clod you hold within your hand,
  Still reeks with human blood.

In the dungeons of her castles,
  Many a woman fair has perished;
And many a man's proud heart
  Has fret, and bled, and burst.
Had these time-stained impassive stones
  A voice to reach our hearing,
Loud would they shriek the leper's cry;
  "Unclean; accurst; accurst!"

And the abbey with its vaults,
  And its gilded mausoleums,
Is but a horrid charnel-house,
  Unfit for human breath.
Where the tyrant, and the martyr,
  The soldier, and the scholar,
Cumber the rank and putrid earth,
  In the vile decay of death.

And her towns and teeming cities,
  Are haunts of woe and ruin;
And floods of crime and drunkenness,
  Pour through them like the main.
Where women turn to beasts,
  And where men their manhood barter,
Where conscience is o'erwhelmed,
  And where souls are trapped, and slain.

You may tell of glorious England,
  But tell, too, of her oppression;
Of dear romantic England,
  Her romance is mixed with crime.
'Neath her hedges green, the beggar crawls,
  Soiling the primrose blossom,
And the vaunted fatness of her land,
  Is naught but filth and slime.

But the clean sea is about her,
And the skies are fair above her.
And time will sweep the criminal
And the bigot from her soil.
Have patience, and have courage,
Hope is left to us who love her,
Some day, a wondrous change will come,
If we be wise, and toil.

DIFFERENT PROPOSITIONS.

Maiden with bangéd hair,
Summer has come again;
Birds sing in concert rare,
And flowers adorn the plain.
In search of healthful exercise,
Come let us walk, my dear;
But the maiden shook her head so wise,
"Perhaps I will, next year."

Maiden, 'tis winter now;
To-morrow, will you go
With horse, and bells, and sleigh, and me,
A-sleighing, in the snow?
"O yes;" she gaily cried,
Her heart in merry tune,
"But why defer the ride so long?
Let's go this afternoon."

A BARBARIAN.

I'm a barber fresh from Barbary;
I cut the man his hair,
I scrape his chin, and hack his cheek,
And make him howl and swear;
I jam him on the head-rest,
And grab him by the nose,
And daub more lather on his face
I guess, than on his clothes.

I fill his eyes with hair ends,
And cram his mouth with lather,
I crowd the towel down his neck,
While in his ears I blather;
I tweak his nose, I twitch his hair,
I make his nostrils larger,
My breath is ranker, stronger, far,
Than that of Job's fierce charger.

THE TWO VOICES.

I hear a soft voice calling;
'Tis the voice of the southern pines;
It speaks to me in the morning,
And woos when the day declines.
It mourns and pleads through the balmy night,
And lulls my spirit to rest,
And says, "O stay; be glad, and sing;
For this is the land of the blest."

And the palm leaves gently rustle,
And the buds of the rose unfold;
And the skies, at eve, and morning,
Blush with their crimson and gold.
And the mocking bird soothes me to sleep,
And butterflies flit all day,
And palms, and flowers, and skies, and birds,
Are coaxing me to stay.

But I hear another voice;
That comes on the northern blast,
'Tis the voice of the spicy hemlock,
On the grey rocks anchored fast.
It tells of the grand old mountains,
Of valleys, and rushing streams,
And river, and mountain, and forest,
Are calling me, in my dreams.

Your green-crowned pines are stately,
And your palms are strange and fine,
But better I love the northern oak,
Than southern palm or pine.
Sweet are your glorious jessamines,
That wantonly climb and cling;
But give me the sweeter arbutus,
And the spice bush by the spring.

Sing praise for your fragrant orange,
And I will join with zest;
But of all the fruits the earth can yield,
The apple is first, and best.
Your tall bananas, and sugar cane,
Are rustling, night and morn;
But ye lack the glint of the northern sun,
On the northern grape and corn.

Our rock-capped hills are rugged;
And our soil must be won by force;
But list' to the splashing waterfall,
That gleams in the streamlet's course.
While your sluggish streams creep lazily
Through the low unchanging land;
And the heart grows sad and homesick,
O'er your miles of barren sand.

Fresh from realms Elysian,
Your soft soothing breezes blow;
And gusts of rarest perfume,
Through the hours come and go.
While o'er the fields of northern ice,
The keen-edged zephyrs roll;
That vigor bring to brain and arm,
And purpose to the soul.

O many kindly northern hearts,
In southern homes are set;
And the friendly grasp of southern hands,
'Till death, I will not forget.
The southern land is a pleasant land,
Where, for a while, I roam;
But I own the spell of the voice from the north,
For it whispers to me, of home.

1899.

MY BIRTHDAY.

I'm older than I was a year ago.
This is not a great discovery, I know.
But to me it comes so close,
That it hardly seems jocose.
Let me reckon what the years for me can show.

Not much of worldly wisdom can I boast;
Just to shelter from the pelting rain, at most.
To a fool, I nothing say,
Nor dispute the right of way
With a gun, a locomotive, or a post.

Of lands and wealth, I have but scanty store;
Enough to pay my way, and little more.
My balance at the bank,
Shows three ciphers and a blank;
And stocks and bonds they worry me no more.

But I point, with the Roman matron's pride,
To the living riches, standing by my side.
There is no greater pleasure,
For a parent, than the treasure
Of a child with truth and honor for a guide.

I have health, and it is joy to live and sing;
I have strength for any work the years may bring;
And he, with will and power,
For the duties of each hour,
Need not wish to change his station with a king.

1905.

OLD HOME WEEK ANNIVERSARY.

Come sing with me, of days now growing olden;
And tell the stories of an age grown grey;
Rude wooden age; that now is ripe and golden;
The misty dawn and morning of to-day.

Come tell of those who crossed the mountain ranges,
To found new homes, within an unknown land;
Tell of their deeds, and of the wond'rous changes,
Since first they gazing stood, where now we stand.

Brave men and women they, and strong and daring;
Fitted to toil, to combat and endure;
Coarse was their raiment, rude and scant their faring;
Fierce their resentment, but their friendship sure.

They grappled with the forest, and the land;
While dangers lurked about them, night and day;
Fierce prowling beasts crouched low on every hand,
And savage red men sought to burn and slay.

Undaunted by the peril and the strife,
They reared their log-walled cabins on the plain,
Where once they teemed with sturdy active life,
Decaying fragments only now remain.

Long ages since, the mighty floods o'ersweeping
The lofty hilltops with their icy flow;
Carved the fair valleys where the streams are creeping,
And shaped the hills where now the forests grow.

Then came the bison, and the mammoth hairy;
The deer, the moose, the elk, the shaggy bear.
They roamed o'er all the land, on hill and prairie,
They fed, and fought, and made their home and lair.

Came too, that race whose story is untold;
Save as we read it in each mystic mound;
Who searched the land for copper, oil, and gold,
And gathered harvests from the willing ground.

From whence they came, or how, or where they went,
We know not; and perhaps may never learn;
Nor what they seemed nor how their lives were spent,
We know they vanished, and will not return.

And then the red man claimed the scene, and roved
O'er all the land that knew no other lord.
And lived on nature's bounty; fought and loved,
Unfettered as the hawk that o'er him soared.

He, too, will soon be but a memory;
Relentless time will sweep his tribes away;
But still on many a stream his names shall be
Soft-flowing, as their waves, that gleam and play.

The English rose, transplanted to our soil,
Encountered here, the lilies fair of France.
Through blood and carnage, dark intrigue and toil,
They strove and struggled with uncertain chance.

The lilies perished; and the rose grown bold,
Pierced all who touched it, with its spiteful thorn;
'Till patience ceased; and anger uncontrolled,
Plucked out the rose, and liberty was born.

Grown rich and strong, bad men awakened strife;
And passion strove to rend the land in twain.
And brother's hand assailed his brother's life,
'Till blood and death, redeemed the land again.

Close to our shores, a people sore oppressed
By cruel tyrants, struggled to be free;
We heard their cries, their many wrongs redressed,
We broke their chains, and gave them liberty.

And since that time, no war our land has known.
On battlefields is waving yellow grain,
O'er all the realm, has kindlier feeling grown;
Heaven grant that war my never come again.

Of all the products of our teeming soil,
The best are gathered from the human field;
The sturdy offspring of our sons of toil,
That noble men, and worthy women yield.

And many such have roamed o'er land and main;
Thinking of home scenes through each lengthening year,
Then let us as they wander back again,
Give them a kindly welcome, and good cheer.

1905.

THE STRANGER AT NILES.

I've come from o'er the mountains;
It seems so many miles;
And I'd been a long time on the way,
Ere I arrived at Niles.

And all were pleased to greet me;
I knew it by their smiles;
And I was very glad, indeed,
To rest awhile, at Niles.

I had but scanty clothing,
And I heeded not the styles,
But they had a new suit all complete,
They gave to me, at Niles.

And I had quite forgot my name,
Although I think 'twas Giles;
But they provided one for me,
The best they had at Niles.

I hope I need not travel more,
Where rocks are strewn in piles;
If they'll permit, I'll stay with them,
And make my home at Niles.

I'll play, and laugh, and sing for them,
Do all that care beguiles;
For they've been very kind to me,
The pleasant folks at Niles.

To help them, and to cheer them,
I'll use all my little wiles;
And one of them, I'll call, "da da,"
And one, "mam mam," at Niles.

1906.

A KANSAS IDYL

By a Pennsylvania Idler.

Beside the solemn Solomon,
I walked with solemn tread;
The searching sun of Kansas,
Was blazing overhead.
The Solomon was solemn,
For Pipe Creek, after dinner,
Had smoked; and into Solomon
Had emptied all was in her.

Upon the shallow ripples,
The channel cats were lying;
While high in air, their dorsal fins
Like pennants gay, were flying.
And in the pools, the mud cats,
In solemn silence waited,
'Till the Solomon got wet again,
And fish lines were a-baited.

Rock City claimed my notice,
Upon the rolling plain;
But waiting for a street car there,
I found a wait in vain.
Its avenues so fair and wide,
Might far extend this ditty;
But like the old Gomorrah,
It is but a silent city.

I saw the teeming wheat fields,
Their shocks and mighty stacks;
And the rabbits out at Pawnee Gap,
The double-gaited Jacks.
If I was evolution mad,
I could formulate a rule,
To prove the wing-eared rabbit,
Was the father of the mule.

In pretty Minneapolis,
On Saturday, I saw
The streets well lined with buggies,
Bright and clean without a flaw.
A mortgage is a handy tool,
For him who holds the strings;
But in the great alfalfa belt,
Top buggies are the things.

A Populist from Salt Creek,
With his mane adown his back;
And waving paws, and lolling tongue,
Explained the nation's lack.
He had no lands, he had no wit,
No standing had, nor station,
But he would cure all human ills,
By Kansas legislation.

Whereat the haw trees all haw hawed;
The cat fish mewed and purred,
And even babes in arms remarked,
"A-goo-goo; how absurd."
Free silver, or free greenbacks,
Whatever he proposes,
There are those who seem to think they think,
That he out-Moses Moses.

I saw the cyclone cellars,
But not the Kansas zephyr;
And in the sedgy pastures, saw
Full many a steer and heifer.
The flaunting sunflowers everywhere,
A golden landscape made,
And then the sun went down, and left
All Kansas in the shade.

1906.

LINES TO AN INFANT.

O welcome, welcome, little stranger!
Although thy cradle is no manger,
  Thou art to us a child divine,
We'll shelter thee from every danger.

Thy shapely form, so weak and tender,
Those little hands, so soft and slender,
  Impel us, in our joy, to give
To thee, all service we can render.

For thou hast brought us boundless pleasure,
Our happiness defies all measure;
  Life has now a deeper meaning,
Thou art our best, our dearest treasure.

To all that's good, our hearts commend thee,
May health and happiness befriend thee,
  And for thy care and guidance, too,
May we be worthy to attend thee.

1909.

A SCHOOL IDYL (IDLE).

"According to the modern chemistry, sugars are either mono-saccharine, di-saccharine, or poly-saccharine. Hence—

THE SACCHARIDS.

A monody. (Mono-di.)

Mother, may I go to school?
I think it would be jolly,
To learn about those three sweet girls;
Mono, Di, and Poly.

THE HUSKIN'.

Lyme Avery gave a huskin',
When he farmed at Bill McCornick's;
In the field along the "second bench,"
Among the weeds an' dornicks;
An' Lyme's boys, Nate, an' Hiram,
Talked about the huskin' so
That Jim an' me, we asked our pap,
An' pap said we might go.

An' them that came to husk,
  Was mostly men an' little boys;
The men they did the huskin',
  An' the boys helped with the noise.
Their huskin' pegs were fastened on
  With straps to make 'em stay,
An' they knelt among the fodder,
  Like as they was goin' to pray.

An' how they raced, an' threw the corn;
  An' how the piles they grew;
With the "hog corn" an' the good hard ears,
  An' little "nubbins" too.
The boys they chased the field-mice,
  When they tumbled down the shocks,
An' put corn silk down each others backs,
  'Till they got to throwin' rocks.

But it wasn't such a huskin'
  As they paint in many a yarn;
With lanterns, an' boys an' girls,
  All hunkered in the barn;
Where, if you find a red ear,
  You've a right to kiss your girl;
An' the cider, an' the stable smell,
  They set your head a-whirl.

No, there weren't any girls,
  An' red ears didn't count;
An' of cider, an' of kissin',
  There was no great amount.
An' the win' blew sharp an' frosty,
  An' our hands grew red an' numb;
An' we boys declared, that huskin' lunch,
  Would surely, never come.

But it did though, for at four o'clock
  They lugged around a feast;
An' the huskin' operations,
  Then unanimously ceased.
The lunch was much commended,
  An' from that time on 'till dusk,
We boys kep' on admittin'
  That we'd rather eat, than husk.

If a boy becomes despondent,
  Loses interest in life;
Gets bluer than a blue-bag,
  Lags an' wavers in the strife,
There's naught so quick will cheer him,
  An' set him on his legs,
As to touch his epigastric nerve
  With pie, an' hard-boiled eggs.

But the dark'nin' came at last;
An' the clouds grew black an' torn;
An' we stacked the bundled fodder
On the piles of yellow corn.
An' we straightened out our stiffened legs,
An' quickly climbed the fence;
An' part one, of Avery's huskin',
Had outgrown the present tense.

That night, there was a huskin',
But in quite a different place.
'T was at Mr. Avery's domicile
That stood beside the race.
An' they didn't husk no corn,
But played games, an' sung, an' pranced,
An' kissed, an' e't an' so forth;
An' husked their coats, an' danced.

An' the crowd also, was different;
For the old men didn't come.
But the fellers with their hair so slick,
Who thought that they were "some";
An' girls with their curls on,
An' each a bran' new frock,
These were the ones who husked that night,
'Till after two o'clock.

The house was small, the family large,
An' scanty was the room—
So the gatherin', as you might expect,
Gave the old house a boom.
But at huskin's, an' at parties,
I've heard them as knows, declare
You kin pack a hundred people in,
An' still have room to spare.

Secluded in a corner,
Screened by beaus an' maidens prim;
With eyes an' ears observant,
Sat my little brother Jim.
An' another priv'leged character,
The doin's saw that night;
The very individual
Who sets out this tale to write.

Well, supper it was called,
After we'd bin there a spell;
An' the merry crowd of huskers,
Promptly on the supper fell;
Without a show of diffidence,
For, sure as you are born,
They worked with more abandon,
Than the folks who husked the corn.

If you have urgent work to do,
Or, if you are in debt,
Your friends will say they're sorry,
But will let you work an' fret.
But if you give a party,
An' invite them all to dine,
They will share your bottom dollar,
Drink your coffee, or your wine.

The supper was a feature
That could not have been ignored;
But when at last 'twas over,
The way they cleared the board
An' hustled roun', an' tidied up
The room, with haste an' skill,
Showed plainly, that the afterpart,
Was more important still.

Prompt an' ready, when the floor was cleared,
They started with the games;
They were divers in their number,
I can't think of half their names.
But if I can remember right,
The first to start the fun,
Was the ancient one that follows,
Telling of King James' son.

"King William was King James' son,
An' from the royal race he sprung;
An' upon his breast he wore a star,
That showed the royal points of war.
Go choose your east, go choose your west,
An' choose the one that you love best;
An' if she's not here, to take your part,
Go choose another, with all your heart.
Down on this carpet, you must kneel,
Low as the grass grows in yon fiel';
Salute your bride, an' kiss her sweet,
An' then arise, upon your feet."

Which King James, or which King William,
They did not seem to know;
And soon they all expressed a wish
To go to Ohio.
"Where the boys reap an' mow,
An' the girls set an' sew,
We will settle on the banks
Of the pleasant Ohio."

So they went to Ohio,
An' they knelt upon the groun',
Until the choice had fallen
On every player 'roun'.
To start another game,
Then they lost but little time;

While the action, as it ought to do,
Kep' measure with the rhyme.

A lovelorn damsel stood alone;
The rest, described her state;
It seemed, her love had gone to war,
An' met the usual fate.
I can't report the whole affair,
For memory's page is blurred;
But after they'd gone on awhile,
This here is what occurred.

"She was informed, that he was slain,
Fighting under General Wayne;
O no, no, can't be so,
He'll return an' marry you;
O no, no, can't be so,
You go seek an' find him."

An' she took their kind advice,
An' sought an' found him well an' true;
An' she kissed him, an' she married him,
As in all the games they do.
An' they kep' the song a hummin',
Changed sometimes, so " he was shot,
Fighting under General Scott."

Then forth there stepped a couple,
  Arm in arm, with martial tread;
His face, essayed to match her hair,
  An' bloomed a brilliant red.
An' as they marched, they sang,
  An' the chorus kep' repeating,
"We're marching down to Quebec,
  While the drums are loudly beating."

I don't know all the story,
  This I'll tell you confidential;
But arriving at Quebec,
  Did not seem to be essential.
An' these additional words,
  Sang them back to where they started—
"We'll open up the ring, an' let a couple in,
  An' hope they'll be true-hearted."

Another game, that pleased them well,
  An' pleased us youngsters too;
Had much gesticulation,
  Raising hands, an' marching through.
In which the lovers parted,
  An' the man was sent afar;
An 'they finally united were:—
  A tale of love an' war.

"Here stands a lovely couple,
Just joined heart an' han'.
He wants a wife, an' she wants a man,
An' they shall be married,
If they can agree.
They're marching down together,
In love an' harmony.

But now to the wars,
Poor fellow, he must go;
O don't you hear his sad cry of woe?
When I am gone,
O this will be the cry;
If I have left my true-love,
I surely will die.

But here stands my true-love;
An' how do you do?
An' how have you been since
I parted with you?
The wars are all over,
An' free from all harm;
An' can't you give us joy,
By the raising of your arm?"

The kissin' games are over,
An' the dancin' now begins—
Though some who undertake it,
Are unstable on their pins.
For sundry flasks are hidden,
Just outside the habitation,
An' frequent searchin' parties,
Had indulged in imbibation.

So the figures of the dances,
Were, perhaps, not quite exact;
But made up with boisterous merriment
The polished grace they lacked.
An' the rank an' pungent "red eye,"
Lent its odor to the air,
Rank before to saturation,
From the lungs assembled there.

Ask the butcher for a chew,
An' his bloody greasy hand,
Will plunge into his pocket,
'Mong the coin, an' fuzz, an' sand;
An' you'll bite the plug, where his old teeth,
Unlaunder'd, oft' have been;
An' you'll thank him, never thinking,
That this isn't very clean.

An' some will kiss promiscuous,
As if they thought 'twas good;
An' exchange sore mouth, bacteria,
An' the debris of their food.
While some will even kiss the lips
Closed by disease and death;
But there's nothing much more filthy,
Than to breathe each other's breath.

Phil. Smiley brought his fiddle,
But it lacked one fourth its strings.
So made lop-sided music,
Like Pete Carner, when he sings.
His wife she tried the fiddle too;
An' so did Alex Griffin;
When snap, another string broke,
Just as easy as egg "striffen."

They drew the line at two strings,
An' the fiddle bein' done for;
The boys set in to hum the tunes,
Which made the others fun for.
An' the way they varied "Gilderoy,"
Would have bothered old Neal Gow;
As with "du ather dah, an' a duther ather dah,"
They added to the row.

Did this mitigate the dancing?
No, it added to its zest;
An' those who did the dancing,
Danced their hardest, an' their best.
They danced French fours, cotillions,
An' old Virginia reels.
While comments, added vigor
To their tapping toes an' heels.

Between the sets, Bill Sanford
An' his younger Brother Snowd.,
To listeners uncritical,
Their vocal talents showed;
They sang of Willie Riley,
An' songs of similar strain,
An' having pleased with "Juba,"
Sang an' "patted" it, again.

But the fairest summer day,
May be marred by storm an' thunder;
An' was ever human pleasure
Rounded out complete, I wonder?
The songs all cease, the dancing stops;
For word comes quickly now,
That, "some fellers just outside the door,
Are kicking up a row."

Then, as on a like occasion
In fair Brussels, as you've read,
There were very sudden partings;
There were looks of woe an' dread.
One-armed Dory, gave his coat an' watch,
To Mary Ette, to hold;
But lingered to assure her
He would knock them stiff an' cold.

An' a trio of the Wilkins boys,
Alex., James, an' Othaniel,
To test their pluck an' prowess,
Seemed anxious for a trial.
An' Theodore Dewoody,
Sallied forth, the siege to raise;
"Coop" Cochran, started for the breach,
Likewise, his brother Hays.

It seems, that young Lute Lamberton,
An' others, of like station;
Had come from over town, to husk,
Without an invitation.
Came to join in the festivities,
An' have a little fun;
An' when they wouldn't let them in,
The jangle had begun.

The defenders of the huskin'
Tumbled out, in such a swarm;
That they scared off the besiegers,
Who, to save themselves from harm,
Retreated o'er the little brook,
An' climbed the farther hill,
An' stoned the force pursuing them,
An' "sassed" them, with great skill.

Andy Bowles, stood on the nearer bank,
An' shook his fists, an' swore;
He could "lick his weight in wild-cats,"
He assured them, o'er an' o'er;
An' dared them to come back an' fight,
But they didn't take the dare;
So his only satisfaction
Was to shake his fists, an' swear.

The swarm of huskers settled,
An' to the hive went back,
But Che't Richards, brother Jim an' me,
We took the homeward track.
By Smoky Row, the Rolling Mill,
An' o'er the upper bridge;
Content, but very sleepy,
To our home, on Connelly's Ridge.

TO A BUTTERFLY.

Ancyloxipha Numitor.

Dainty little butterfly,
Why do you flutter by?
  Are you vainly trying
    To escape your weighty name?
Spinsters oft' their surnames change,
For good or ill; and is it strange
  That men, and that butterflies
    Should wish to do the same?

Gentle Ancyloxipha,
Pyrgus tessellata, grey,
  Although a larger smetterling,
    Supports a lighter name.
And the great Papilios,
Strong, as every netter knows,
  Have scarcely half your load to bear,
    Which surely, is a shame.

Pretty little Numitor,
What were you created for?
  Was it that a scientist
    Might spatter you with Greek?
Or a net your flight curtail,
Or a Klaeger pin impale,
  Or were you meant to flit in peace
    Beside the sedgy creek?

Springing from your chrysalis,
To this world of woe, and bliss,
  You flutter in the sunshine
    For a little while, and then
The frosts begin; the flowers decay;
Alas, poor Ancyloxipha;
  Life is mainly tragedy,
    To butterflies and men.

APR 26 1909

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Oct. 2009

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